[ARCHERS]

422 Certain objects that by their nature are collective property, however, are considered to belong to the finder. This applies mainly to vegetable products, a honey tree, a termite nest, or a nest of grubs or caterpillars. All who help in the gathering are due their share of these products, but the major part goes to the finder.

422 All personal objects made or acquired by an [423] Mbuti are private property. Thus not only the utensils, but the homestead itself, is the property of the wife, who may, if she wishes, pull the hut down as a gesture of defiance. Weapons belong to men; clothes, to each individual. These objects can be disposed of in any way, at [685] will. Petty pilfering is considered as theft, and theft is both forbidden and punished; but Schebesta does not describe any system of punishment.

• 428 With regard to succession, generally the brothers or the sons, says Schebesta, inherit from a father; sisters and daughters, from a mother.

000 Schebesta (1948, 533) argues that, as the

[P. 186-B]

1: Turnbull E-4, 5 (1951-1955) 1965 FO4 Pygmies FO4
Mbuti
Zaire FO1

[NET HUNTERS]

P
628 [P.229-A]
476 change of camp may thus reveal significant
36 tendencies not only in interpersonal relations
578 but also in the composition of the band itself.
621

Relationships Between Mbuti and Villagers

P
177 Putnam had the advantage of being able to
57 observe the changes in composition of the Epulu
Z hunting band and its ties with neighboring vil-
563 lagers for more than two decades. As is stated
57 above, the relationship between the net hunters
and their villager neighbors is an individual and
strongly personal relationship, as described by
P Schebesta (p. 185). The effect is that of an in-
Z herited relationship, but inheritance is not the
[428] basis. The effect is maintained only by the close-
ness of the personal bonds of loyalty and affec-
tion. If these bonds are weakened through any
cause, there is nothing to stop the Pygmy from
changing his allegiance to another villager. It
Z may cause bad feeling between him and his pa-
[628] tron, but it primarily affects the relationship be-
tween the two villagers concerned.

1: Turnbull E-4, 5 (1951-1955) 1965 FO4 Pygmies FO4
Mbuti

[P. 230-A]

422 owned or merely possessed by the individual is not answerable at the moment. It would seem that utensils are in fact owned by the women and spears and bows and arrows by the men, but hunting nets appear to be subject to collective control, not only over their positioning during the hunts but also over their participation itself. Further, it is recorded in the notes that on occasion a hunting net that has not produced game for the community may be burned. All we know is that, when it is burned it is done with the approval of the community, though apparently on the initiative of the
• 428 "owning" family. There is no detailed information on inheritance, only the general observation that girls inherit from their mothers, men from their fathers.

421 It seems, first, that the forest and both its
[186] animal and vegetable produce are considered by the net hunters to be the property of the Mbuti as a whole, as opposed to the alien
[621] villagers. Second, it seems that any one section of the forest belongs to the band that hunts that section. But, although the band may be said to own a part of the forest and its members have an equal right to the produce, the equality is of opportunity rather than of division. A

2: Turnbull E-5 (1951-1958) 1965 FO4 Pygmies FO4
Mbuti

gardless of lineage, depending upon the context. Affinal ties are considered just as legitimate, and used just as frequently in balancing power and in determining allegiance as cognatic ties. In this way security is guaranteed to any individual because of the number of recognized social groups to which he can claim membership. This ambivalence is again an important structural principle, and is certainly manifest in the social groupings observable in the building of successive hunting camps.

If age rather than kinship fixes one's place within the band, then, we have to consider how a band maintains any sense of continuity from one generation to the next. There is the alliance of age groups and the educational role of age groups which provide some degree of continuity, but this would not be sufficient in view of what we have said about the shifting composition of the band. It is undoubtedly territory that gives the band its identity as such and enables that identity to persist, and it is to his territory, as to his age group, rather than to any kin group, that an Mbuti owes allegiance.

Kinship is recognized in assessing problems of inheritance, but with so little to inherit the problems are minimal. In general a man's belongings are divided among his sons or, if his sons are too young, they are held in trust for them by his brothers. Similarly with a woman's belongings. Kinship may also be used to maintain an economic balance, just as it may be used to maintain a political balance, by advancing claims to the spoils of a hunt on the ground of kinship, or indeed by advancing claims for the adoption of children. But again, as such claims are advanced on grounds of both cognatic and affinal ties, the principles of unilineal descent are directly contradicted.

In fact the nuclear family is best regarded as one of a number of cells that make up the totality of the band, each cell reflecting the same basic structure as the band itself. Within the family the factors of territory and age also play a part, the locality of the hut symbolizing the unity of the family and its separateness from others, the age differential dividing the family in activity, authority and allegiance. Even fission and fusion are a part of family life, as children are apt to leave their natal family any time after they reach the age of three or four, and either be adopted by or simply live for a while with another family in the same band; or they may be adopted by a family in another band and go to live there, even if their parents continue living together in their home band. Such separations within the band do not affect their relationship with other members of their family of the